



MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

FROM:  Joseph T. Edmiston, FAICP, Hon. ASLA, Executive Officer

DATE: May 7, 2008

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item VIII: Consideration of resolution authorizing application to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy for a grant of Proposition 84 funds for interpretive program development and delivery for ranger led public programs and ranger-led interpretive programs specifically designed for disadvantaged youth.**

Staff Recommendation: That the MRCA Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing application to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy for a grant of Proposition 84 funds for interpretive program development and delivery for ranger-led public programs and ranger-led interpretive programs specifically designed for disadvantaged youth.

Background: Interpretation has historically been an important element of the job duties of the MRCA generalist park ranger. This grant will fund the development and implementation of programs to be led by MRCA rangers and that have as a key component the unique perspective of rangers as stewards of the land. These programs will be in addition to those offered by the Division of Interpretation and will not duplicate those efforts. While all programs will feature the interpretation of the natural and cultural resources of Los Angeles River and Santa Monica Bay watersheds they will also include stories, hands-on demonstration and park specific scenarios from the field.

Research demonstrates that interpretation is an effective management tool leading to protection of resources. Educating visitors and inspiring the emotional and intellectual connections between the interests of the visitor and the meanings inherent in the resources leads to greater understanding of and commitment to protection of those resources. People care for what they value and value comes from the "interpretive continuum" that starts with awareness and understanding and ends with stewardship. In the case of Proposition 84, protection" is defined as "those actions necessary to prevent harm or damage to persons, property or natural

resources or those actions necessary to allow the continued use and enjoyment of property or natural resources” and includes interpretation as a means of doing so. Section 75005(m).

Interpretation, as defined in the measure, includes but is not limited to, “a visitor serving amenity that educates and communicates the significance and value of natural, historical, and cultural resources in a way that increases the understanding and enjoyment of these resources and that may utilize the expertise of a naturalist or other specialist skilled at educational interpretation.” (Public Resources Code Section 75005(i)) The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) has a long history of providing relevant and meaningful interpretation and education programs that not only enhance the visitor experience but promote stewardship and protection of the resources. These ranger-led programs will increase the variety of programming available to visitors of parkland owned or managed by the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy in the Los Angeles River and Santa Monica Bay Watersheds.

Los Angeles has fewer acres of accessible parks per person than any major U.S. city, and poor neighborhoods suffer the most. Only 30 percent of Angelenos live within a quarter mile of a park, compared with between 80 percent and 90 percent in Boston and New York. An element of this proposal is quarterly Junior Ranger jamborees which will provide a weekend experience in the Santa Monica Mountains for children from urban areas who are enrolled in the MRCA Junior Ranger program during which they will be mentored by MRCA rangers.

In addition to the programs and materials developed for the general public, specific ranger interpretive programs will focus on programs which serve disadvantaged and severely disadvantaged communities. This includes programs at Vista Hermosa Park and along the Los Angeles River, as well as programs for disadvantaged youth from both watersheds. A “Severely disadvantaged community” means a community with a median household income less than 60% of the statewide average. (Public Resources Code Section 75005(g))

Lastly, this grant will allow the addition of an interpretive element to the MRCA’s youth leadership programs such as the Ranger Explorers, the Wildland Fire Volunteers and the Vista Hermosa Youth Corps. The addition of these elements will broaden the expertise and abilities of participants by giving them the skills needed for program development and delivery as well as increase the interpretive amenities offered to the public by creating a new core group of interpreters.

The specific scope of services that will be provided, includes:

Guided interpretive programs, including program development and implementation, directly relating to the watershed's rich natural, cultural and historic resources. Programming will focus on interpretation of the site's endangered species, ecology, importance in the watershed, conservation, biodiversity, Mediterranean ecosystems, wildlife corridors, and fire ecology.

Interpretive materials that support ranger interpretive programs, including site specific materials, safety information and other supplemental materials that are designed and implemented to increase visitors enjoyment and understanding of the watershed;

Quarterly Junior Ranger Jamborees where participants in the MRCA's Junior Ranger programs from all over the city will have an overnight experience where they will receive interpretive programs led by rangers on survival, adaptation and interdependence in the eco-systems of the Santa Monica Mountains and how these disciplines relate to the human experience.

Ranger participation in the development and implementation of the Vista Hermosa Park Leadership Program, which will include recruitment, training and employment of young adults from the community surrounding Vista Hermosa for the purposes of increasing their enjoyment of understanding of the parks resources as well as communicating that understanding to other community members. Matching funds are available for this program to cover non-interpretive elements.

Development of specific interpretive elements to the Ranger Explorer program to enhance the services provided by these young, urban adults. Such elements will include the addition of curriculum on interpretation, program development and delivery under the guidance of a park ranger supervisor. Matching funds are available for this program to cover non-interpretive elements

Development of specific interpretive elements, including program development and delivery, to the wildland fire volunteer program to enhance the services provided by these volunteers. Such elements will include the addition of curriculum on interpretation of fire - a significant element in both the natural and cultural history of Santa Monica Mountain Parkland. Volunteers will then provide public programs, under the supervision of a park ranger. Matching funds are available for this program to cover non-interpretive elements

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The total amount that will be requested from the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy for this grant will be \$115,000 from the Los Angeles River Watershed and \$89,000 for the Santa Monica Bay Watershed. Ranger staff will work with the Division of Interpretation for coordination, training, program development, materials and outreach.